EC/Switzerland agreement: audiovisual field, participation in the programme MEDIA 2007

2007/0171(NLE) - 21/08/2007 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: to sign, and provisionally apply, an Agreement with the Swiss Community on the terms and conditions for their participation on the MEDIA 2007 programme.

PROPOSED ACT: Council Decision.

BACKGROUND: the Swiss-Community Agreement on Swiss participation on the MEDIA Plus and MEDIA training programmes came to an end on 31 December 2006. The Community's new programme MEDIA II, allows for EFTA countries, which are members of the EEA, to participate on the new programme. Negotiations with the Swiss authorities regarding the terms and conditions on the new MEDIA 2007 programme have now been concluded.

CONTENT: the purpose of this proposal, therefore, is the signature of an Agreement between the Swiss Confederation and the Community establishing the terms and conditions for Swiss participation on MEDIA 2007.

The main elements of the proposed Agreement, in summary, are as follows:

- in Annex I the Agreement defines the conditions of the Swiss broadcasting regulatory framework. Certain provisions set out in the previous Agreement have been revised and completed in order to make Swiss legislation more compatible with the EU's body of law. For example, Articles 1 and 4 in Annex I permit a closer match on provisions regarding the freedom of reception and retransmission. Article 2 in the same Annex guarantees Swiss compliance with Community provisions regarding measures taken to safeguard the broadcasting of events of major importance to society;

- Swiss projects must meet the same conditions, rules and procedures as those applied to Member State projects. This refers, in particular, to the submission, assessment and selection of applications and projects, the various responsibilities of the national structures in the implementation of the programme and the activities related to the monitoring of the participation in the programme;

- Switzerland will pay an annual contribution to the programme;

- on matters relating to financial control and auditing Switzerland agrees to conform to Community provisions, including controls by Community bodies;

- the Agreement will apply provisionally as from the date of its signature and will continue to apply until the programme comes to an end, or until one of the sides notifies the other side of its wish to terminate the Agreement;

- the Agreement will be managed by a joint committee, composed of representatives from both sides.

Other elements of the proposal include: a Joint Declaration on reinforcing co-operation in matters of audiovisual policy; a Joint Declaration to adapt the Agreement once the revisions of the current "Television without Frontiers" Directive comes into force; and a Joint Declaration granting Switzerland symmetrical treatment in correspondence with the commitments undertaken by Switzerland with regard to events of major societal importance.